United States which contained genetically modified maize and soya products;

(c) if so, whether Government need food aid from foreign countries when we are surplus in food;

(d) if so, whether any concrete policy for accepting food has been formulated; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA) : (a) to (e) Proposals in respect of accepting food aid (wheat & rice) are considered, on case to case basis, from time to time depending on the production, demand and availability of foodgrains in the country.

The proposal for importing Corn Soya Blend (CSB) containing genetically modified (GM) material under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme through United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was considered by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) and was not agreed upon in view of the apprehensions expressed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) regarding feeding the vulnerable population with GM food and in the absence of any certification from US regulatory agency confirming that CSB shipment to India does not contain the banned or obsolete variety of corn event.

There is no proposal, at present, relating to foodgrain aid for the Central Pool, in view of the comfortable stocks position of wheat & rice.

Prices of sugar

†3610. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:
SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the new formula regarding fixing the prices of sugar has been announced;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons for the delay?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (c) There is no formula for fixing the prices of levy-free sugar which are determined by the market forces. As regards levy sugar, the ex-factory levy sugar prices are fixed under the provisions of Section 3(3C) of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

National Plan for agro-food industry

3611. SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the agro-food industry has called for an urgent coining of a long-term national plan for its growth;

(b) if so, whether they have welcomed the budget but have pointed out that industry suffered losses to the tune of around Rs. 35,000 crore due to colossal wastage of produce;

(c) whether they have made any suggestions in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps being considered to improve the agro-food industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) The Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been interacting with the Industry Associations. A Draft National Policy on Food Processing Industry has also been prepared as a response to a felt need.

(b) Industry Associations have generally welcomed the Budget. The post-harvest wastage of food commodities has been estimated to be in the range of Rs. 35,000/- crores per annum. The Plans of the Government are designed to reduce this wastage over time.

(c) and (d) The high rate of taxation and multiplicity of food laws, as well as, the cost of capital have been pointed out as some of the factors impeding the growth of the sector. Suggestions have been made to rationalise and simplify the tax structure both at the Central level and State level, as also, to harmonise food standards and bring about a single law and a single agency for this purpose.